

B and I decided to get in one more caving trip before the New Year, so we set our sights on Mystery Cave. Not a spectacular cave, but since neither of us had been caving in awhile it would be nice to go to any cave. There was a bit of excitement to this trip. There was a small passage in the lower portion of the cave that I wanted to check out to see if it was possible to get past it. It had a small opening, but lots of air blowing out of it. Even though it is way too small to climb through, I had never even checked to see what was inside the passage. We got our gear loaded up and hit the road by 3:00 p.m. We got to the cave in great time, since B likes to drive fast. We anchored from the usual tree and began to rappel into the cave. I went down first and got my gear together while B came down.

*I will refer to B many times. We have been caving together for many months now. He was injured in a caving accident a few years ago and was told he would never walk again. Through hard work and perseverance he not only walks but can get around very well in caves. The trickier parts of a cave might slow him down a bit, but he can make it. He patiently works through an obstacle until he gets past it.*

As for the reference to the small opening in the cave, there is a saying among cavers: "If it blows, it goes". Meaning, if a passage has a good flow of air, it is probably worth investigating.

*After we explored all of the usual passages we climbed down to check out the hole. The hole is located deep in the cave, near the lowest part of the cave. It is on the side of a cave wall, about three feet from the floor. To look inside the hole I had to kneel down to duck under an overhang of rock.*

I used my backup mini-mag light and held it inside the hole to see what I could see. I was excited by what I saw. The wall around the hole was about 3-5 inches thick. It led into a tight passage. The passage opened up a bit just inside the hole. It continued back about 10-12 feet in a small crawl space. After that it seemed to really open up! Although how much we couldn't tell. This could be a virgin passage. (Obviously no one has passed through this

route, but there could be a way into the passage from the other side.) To even get to the crawl space we would have to enlarge the opening. Currently it is about the size of my fist. Once we get past the opening we would have a tight crawl back to where it opened up. It would take some work, but we thought we could do it. We sat down for a few minutes to rest and contemplate our plan of attack. While we sat there in the darkness we could hear the wind howling from the other side of the passage. It was a low, eerie noise. We could also hear a low rumble from time to time. No big deal, though. The cave is in the vicinity of a highway that has heavy trucks drive on it. We figured the rumble was the effect of the trucks resonating through the rocks. We determined that our best plan would be to haul a cordless drill into the cave to drill into the rock. Then we could take a bullpin and a small sledge hammer and break up the rock. It seemed pretty straight-forward. We would widen the hole big enough to squeeze in and see what was on the other side. The efforts to haul all of the equipment down to the hole would be a pain, but we hoped it would be worth it. I named the passage Floyd's Tomb, after Floyd Collins. It seemed to look like the tight spot where Floyd spent his last miserable days on earth.

*Floyd Collins was a caver back in the early 1900's. He got stuck in a tight crawl space and was unable to free himself. It is an amazing story that is detailed in a book called, "Trapped: The Story of Floyd Collins" (I think that was the title. I don't recall the author). Calling our passage Floyd's Tomb was not only a tribute to Floyd, but a commentary of the size of the passage.*

Ha Ha! In retrospect it is funny how simple I thought it was going to be. I figured a few hours work and we would be in. Had I known how long it was going to take I doubt I would have even begun the project. Had I known what I was going to experience in the cave I never would have returned.

We gathered up our gear and headed for the surface. Normally I couldn't care less if I ever came back into this cave. There is nothing special about it. But now I was psyched about getting back and getting through. We hadn't even left the cave and we

were planning our return trip.

(The rest of the journal entry talked about the climb out of the cave, our dinner, and our trip back home)